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SCRIBNERS' PUBLICATIONS.

If there is any one writer who can tell a good short story, it is Frank Stockton. He has an originality about him, a crisp, short, bright manner of putting his words together that make his articles readable, regardless of their often unsatisfactory or unfinished ending. This unfinished termination, we must be understood to mean, applies merely to the mechanical labor of finishing the story, the scheme is all there and the working of it out beyond where the author goes, is left to the mind of the reader. And a most agreeable inheritance is it, for one has gathered such ideas from the author's words that when he comes to the end of them the end of the story beyond that seems to be so very near at hand, and so very natural to reach, that the thoughts travel along involuntarily, and one finds himself solving the problem which the writer has set for him. But this is a trick that Mr. Stockton has perfected, and so perfected that we enjoy it. A collection of these interesting short tales has been published by Messrs. Scribner and are known as "The Lady or the Tiger?"

It is unfortunate—for Mr. Andrew Lang—that he should have published his "Ballads and Verses Vain" so soon after the delightful poems of Mr. Bunner were given us, for one can hardly refrain the inclination to compare, and comparison does Mr. Lang no material benefit. The rhythm and rhyme of these verses is ordinary in the extreme, in no place does it read with that swinging ease which is essential to the true enjoyment of poetry, and frequently it absolutely jars so that one feels an involuntary shiver as he crosses the lines. Who can imagine anything, for instance, more trying than this couplet, describing the advent of Man:

'And with these did he frame two birds lacking a name, without feathers (his game was a puzzle to all); Next around them he fluttered a-dancing and muttered; and, lastly, he uttered a magical call.'

Yet this is from the one poem in the collection which may, with any truth whatever, be termed an original conception. A careful search of the poems fails to bring to light a solitary line conveying a new idea. In the sentimental and moralizing strains, Mr. Lang shows a hesitancy which is positively painful, and his love verses would hardly appeal to the musical ear and quick wit of a modern young lady. There are two selections which may be read with some degree of enjoyment, and only two, as we view it. They are "The Ballade of Old Plays" to Brander Matthews, and "The Ballade of Blue China," from which this verse is taken:

There's a joy without canker or cark, There's a pleasure eternally new, 'Tis to gloat on the glaze and the mark Of china that's ancient and blue; Unchipped all the centuries through It has passed since the chime of it rang, And they fashioned it, figure and hue, In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

Which is good. The gem of the collection, however, is the introduction, by Austin Dobson.

F. MENCKE,

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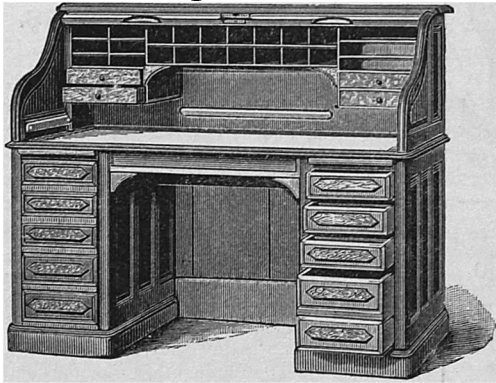
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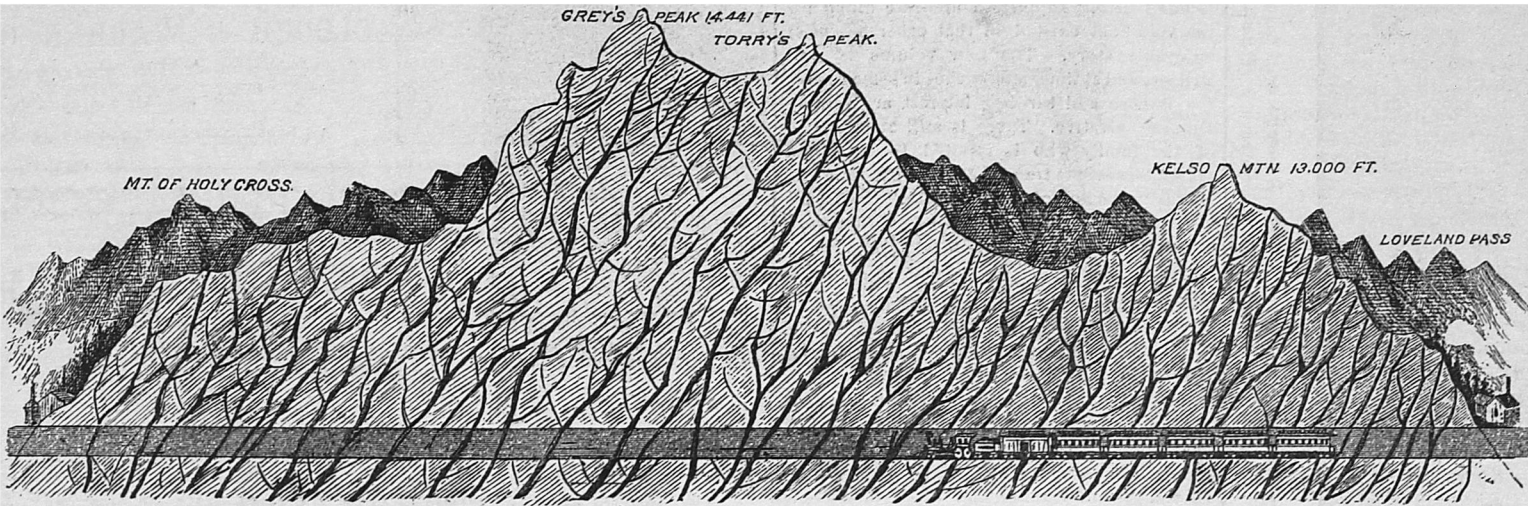
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